

Working Alone

A health and safety guide on lone
working for safety representatives

Contents

Introduction	1
What is lone working?	2
Employer's legal duties	2
Assessing and preventing the risks of working alone	3
Dynamic risk assessments	4
Supervision	5
What are the hazards?	5
Physical and verbal aggression	5
Use of technology	6
Manual handling	7
Fire	8
Hazardous chemicals and other dangerous substances	8
Isolated and remote areas	9
Home working	9
Visiting people in their homes	10
Domiciliary/homecare workers	11
Driving	12
Branch checklist	13
Appendix	14

Introduction

Many UNISON members work alone, or in isolation, as part of their normal day-to-day activities, a trend that has increased in recent years. This is as a result of a number of factors including:

- Government cuts leading to fewer staff;
- Contracting out and fragmentation of services, and safety systems;
- Changes in the way work is organised;
- Increased home working;
- An increase in staff employed in domiciliary/home care.

Those working alone are more vulnerable than those who do not. They get less support from their colleagues and it is more difficult for them to summon help if things go wrong. Good health and safety management may reduce these risks but the best way to eliminate the hazards associated with lone working, is to eliminate lone working.

This guide has been developed to help trade union safety representatives (hereafter referred to as Safety Reps) and stewards tackle the health and safety issues surrounding lone working. It explains why employers should do everything they can to:

1. Minimise lone working and where that can't be achieved;
2. Remove those hazards aggravated or caused by lone working.

What is lone working?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone working as: “those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision”. UNISON believes that the term should also include those working “without close contact with others” (Croner-i, 2017 (see Appendix)).

Lone working does not mean that the person has to be working in complete isolation all of the time. For example, a cleaner may enter a building while it is still very busy, but may be left alone to finish their shift; a medical secretary may work in a department which is busy during the day, but quiet and isolated at other times. In addition there are those for whom lone working has become the norm and just accepted as part of their job, which can also lead to complacency regarding its hazards. For all groups lone working remains hazardous and increases the risks of injury and illness.

Examples of UNISON members who may, at some point, work alone include maintenance staff, porters and security staff, parking wardens and attendants, rent collectors, community (and also some residential) nursing and care workers, paramedics/ambulance technicians, home care workers, library staff (especially those in small or mobile libraries), receptionists and career advisors. This list is by no means exhaustive and there are many other occupations which involve at least some degree of lone working.

Employer's legal duties

There is no legal prohibition on working alone. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999), employers must assess all risks to health and safety, including those caused by working alone. They are then required to eliminate, and if that is not reasonably practicable, minimize those risks to the lowest level that is possible. Determining what is reasonably practicable involves weighing a risk against the trouble, time and money needed to control it. Cost in itself is not a justification for not eliminating a hazard, as this has to be balanced against the likelihood of that hazard causing injury. The more likely lone working is to cause injury, the more trouble the employer is expected to go to, in preventing that injury occurring.

Employers must also report certain accidents suffered by employees, including physically violent incidents under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (2013).

Other relevant regulations include:

- Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations (1981);
- Welfare provisions under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (1992);
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (1992);
- Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (1998).

Assessing and preventing the risks of working alone – what does it involve?

As the HSE says, employers have a duty to assess the risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control those risks. In doing so they must:

- Consult workers when considering potential hazards and measures to avoid/control them;
- Take steps to check adequate control measures are in place. Lone working increases the risk associated with any hazard, so where reasonably practicable work should be redesigned so that the amount of time spent working alone is eliminated or reduced. Other control measures to consider include instruction, training, supervision, lone worker devices and issuing protective equipment;
- Review risk assessments annually, or before then if there has been an incident or a significant change in working practices;
- Ensure that when a lone worker is working at another employer's workplace, that employer informs the lone worker's employer of any hazards and prevention/control measures required. This should then be added to the risk assessment to ensure the worker stays safe.

Case study

At a local school, Annabelle, a member of the school meals team, was required to come into school early, before normal school opening. This was to set up the kitchen for the day and start the early preparations. The safe system of work devised, required her to lock the outer door behind her as a security measure, so that she was then alone in the canteen area until normal working hours. This may have made the premises more secure, but also meant that Annabelle would have difficulty getting assistance if she was injured or sick, especially as there was no telephone, intercom or radio system.

While Annabelle was locked inside, a provisional order, which included sacks of vegetables and crates of foodstuffs, was delivered and left outside the door, creating an obstruction for pupils and staff entering the school. Annabelle consequently started to manually bring in the food deliveries on her own, opening and shutting the outer door behind her, before her colleagues arrived.

There was a general risk assessment for manual handling in the canteen and staff had been given information about carrying pots and pans safely. However, it had failed to take account of what to do if heavy loads were left to be moved, by staff who were working alone. Annabelle should have been instructed not to lift, push, or pull these heavy loads without mechanical aids, or the support of colleagues.

Key messages: Risk assessments must be suitable and sufficient. In this case the employer has focussed on issues around security, but ignored those involving manual handling, and emergency measures if an accident were to occur.

For more information on how to carry out a risk assessment, and what safety reps can expect from employers read the UNISON Guide "Risk assessment: a guide for UNISON safety reps" (see Appendix).

Dynamic risk assessments

These are used in the emergency services, or other workplaces where it is not always possible to identify all the hazards relating to a role, especially where the workplace or area is in the community or outside the employer's immediate control. In such situations workers should be trained to undertake "dynamic risk assessments" at the work location on arrival. A dynamic risk assessment refers to the process of adapting the findings of generic assessments to rapidly changing circumstances and cover situations that can't be anticipated in advance, for example the threat posed by animals or other hostile elements. It is important workers are trained to deal to make dynamic decisions, however this should be a complement, and not a substitute, to a planned and documented risk assessment. (TUC, 2008 (see Appendix))

Case study

Joe, a lone paramedic, arrived at the property of a patient. However Joe was refused access, with the patient making threats to kill him. In keeping with his training, Joe walked away and tried to summon support through his radio. As he was doing so, the patient opened the door, holding an 8 inch knife and chased Joe down the street. Joe escaped without any physical injuries, and for the next few weeks continued on with his duties. However over the weeks following the incident, he started to experience anxiety issues and difficulty sleeping, and was eventually diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As a result UNISON took legal action which resulted in substantial compensation for Joe.

Joe's training enabled him to avoid serious physical injury. However despite this training, Joe was still working alone and this put him in a vulnerable position, for which he suffered the consequences.

Key messages: Joe's radio enabled him to alert his colleagues to his situation, however it did not provide any guarantee that support would arrive in time to prevent injury.

His training enabled him to carry out a dynamic risk assessment, that in this particular incident, prevented serious physical, but not psychological, injury. A full risk assessment could have identified the support Joe required to prevent or control the incident, and avoid his subsequent illness.

Supervision

HSWA requires employers to provide information, instruction, training and supervision to their staff to ensure their safety and health at work. The nature of lone working means that employees are not under constant supervision, so alternative arrangements must be made. Although proper information, instruction, and training can provide employees with the competence to work on their own, there still needs to be some method of monitoring lone workers to ensure that they remain safe. The risk assessment should identify the level of supervision required and the means of providing it. The risk assessment should also set out the procedures for lone workers reporting to base. These should include:

- Leaving details of their daily work schedule;
- Expected arrival and departure times;
- Contact names and telephone numbers;
- Reporting in at regular intervals;
- Raising the alarm if the lone worker doesn't report in, and they cannot be contacted.

What are the hazards?

People who work alone face the same hazards in their daily work as other workers. However for lone workers there will always be a potentially greater risk of these hazards causing harm and in some cases significantly so. It is essential these added risks are taken into account when carrying out risk assessments. The obvious way of removing them is to eliminate lone working, and this is an option all employers should at least consider, even if it is eventually concluded that such a measure is not reasonably practicable. Below is a list of the hazards where the potential risks for doing harm are likely to be significantly affected by working alone. These are accompanied by suggestion of how these added risks could be reduced.

Physical and verbal aggression

These hazards affect nearly all those that work with the public, and not only those who work alone. However the risks for those working alone are significantly increased. That is why UNISON believes that employers should seek to eliminate lone working for public facing staff wherever possible. Work can be redesigned so that home visits are replaced by, for example, community centres or outpatient services. Where these options are not practicable, for example patients with mobility problems or where the service necessitates visiting the client's home (e.g. household cleaning), staff could be accompanied by a colleague, which could also increase the speed and quality of service.

However UNISON recognises that many members are required by their employer to work alone. That is why it is vital employers ensure that procedures are in place so that all such incidents are recorded and reported. This will enable special measures to be put in place for clients that have a record of violent behaviour. Where services are supplied to clients by multiple providers employers should be urged to share data, as far as possible whilst complying with data protection requirements. The Information Commissioner Office (ICO) has published guidance on data sharing (see Appendix for more details).

It explains how emergency services and local councils can share confidential information to assist vulnerable people, and how and when organisations can use the “public interest” (e.g. when a patient has committed a serious crime) justification to share information that would otherwise be considered confidential.

It is important staff are given a contact number, and that employers can easily locate them, so that support can be provided when required.

To find out more about violence at work and what employers should do to protect their workers from assault read the UNISON Guide “It’s not part of the job” (see Appendix).

Case study

Caroline, a District Nurse, went alone to attend a patient who lived with his son for a pre-arranged appointment. Upon arrival the son begun to behave erratically, and then assaulted and threatened Caroline with a knife.

Caroline managed to text colleagues but received no assistance as they were busy dealing with their own patients. Luckily Caroline received a call from a colleague (on an unrelated matter) and, by leaving the phone line open whilst talking to the patient, she managed to convey sufficient information to indicate she was in trouble. However she was still unable to tell her colleague where she was. The surgery where Caroline worked, still used a paper based appointment system, not an electronic one which could have been shared across the whole team. Neither did the surgery operate a system which required staff to phone in before and after an appointment. Caroline’s colleague therefore had to phone the surgery to access the appointment diary and summon the police.

Following the incident the employer admitted liability and agreed compensation for the psychological stress Caroline had suffered. They also provided her and other colleagues with

communication lanyards which incorporated an alarm, allowing the call centre to hear conversations in the case of an emergency. Lastly a system was set up whereby each member of the team could electronically access each other’s diary of appointments.

Key message: All employers should have a basic good health and safety system so that workers have someone to contact should they get in trouble, and which also enables managers and colleagues to summon help if necessary.

Use of technology

Devices, such as personal alarms, panic buttons and mobile phones have provided an increasing number of ways of allowing staff to keep in touch with, and summon support from, their colleagues or the police. All of these can, if used correctly and appropriately, make work safer.

Personal alarms can enable support to be summoned more quickly. However they do not prevent assaults occurring.

Similarly mobile phones, especially in urban areas with good signal strength, can help to maintain contact. However unlike the better personal alarm systems, they are difficult and cumbersome to use as a means of summoning help, when someone is attacked, or under threat of attack. In addition phones don’t work well in some areas and are not always reliable. Finally handling a phone can make the worker a target for attack.

In some cases employers have issued lone worker devices to some staff but not others, which can fragment and undermine existing safety systems. Subsequently staff who have not been issued with such devices are put at greater risk (see case study (Adrienne) below).

Any device is only as good as the systems that support it. New technology won’t work unless you have robust procedures that enable lone workers to

keep in touch and get help should they need it. In addition any new equipment should be introduced in consultation with workers, through their trade union safety reps, as they are most likely to know what will work and what won't.

Case study

Adrienne was required to visit a client's home following an extremely distressed telephone call. On Adrienne's arrival at the client's 12th floor flat, the client became increasingly agitated and attempted to jump through a window and off her balcony. When Adrienne advised the client that she was going to have to call the police, the client went into her kitchen, fetched a large carving knife and threatened to kill Adrienne.

Despite knowing that the client had a history of violent and aggressive behaviour, Adrienne was permitted to attend to the client on her own. In addition, whilst other members of staff had been issued with a personal alarm, Adrienne hadn't. UNISON, acting on behalf of Adrienne, took legal action against the employer on the grounds that they had failed in their duties to carry out a full and sufficient risk assessment and protect Adrienne from harm. As a result Adrienne was awarded a substantial sum in damages.

Key messages: Risk assessments should put systems in place that ensures staff receive sufficient support and are kept safe when caring for patients with a record of challenging behaviour. New technology, when introduced, should be made available to all staff that may need it.

Case study

Rent collectors in the north east were issued with personal alarms following a number of violent incidents. Staff discovered the alarms kept going off independently, so after several months use and numerous false alarms, they ceased to use them. Consequently Colin, a rent collector standing in for a colleague who

had been assaulted, was not equipped with the device when he was attacked and killed. No consultation or monitoring system was in place to identify problems by staff using the alarms.

Key messages: Employers must consult with their workers over any new technology (or any other method of prevention or control), and ensure that they are trained in its use. They should have systems in place that ensure that any preventive method is regularly reviewed, and which encourages staff to speak out without recrimination about that or any other safety concern.

Manual handling

According to the HSE, manual handling is the most common cause of non-fatal injuries at work. Whether or not a worker is alone or with colleagues, hazardous manual handling must, wherever possible, be avoided by either redesigning the task to avoid moving the load or by automating/mechanising the process. However, even where the process is mechanised, lone working can still significantly increase the risks.

There will be situations where manual handling is unavoidable. In such cases employers must reduce the likelihood of injury to the lowest level practicable, and one way of doing this is by eliminating lone working. Some loads just cannot be lifted safely by one person, and where this is the case, the worker should wait until support arrives. Even where the worker may usually be able to manage the load on their own, unforeseen events can occur which prove otherwise. This is why lone working should be avoided wherever possible, and when it can't, arrangements should be made so that workers can request support.

All staff must be trained in:

- How manual handling injuries occur;
- The safe use, and selection, of the appropriate mechanical aids;

- Appropriate safe systems of work;
- Safe manual handling technique (this includes when it is, and isn't appropriate to manually handle).

UNISON's guidance on manual handling can be found within its guide "Aches, pains and strains" (see Appendix for details).

Case study

Shantha, who worked as a care assistant, visited a patient's residence to change wound dressings. The patient was standing up and using a zimmer frame for support when she suddenly fell backwards onto Shantha. This resulted in significant spinal injuries to Shantha and a long period off work. It transpired that Shantha's employer knew that the patient (who had Parkinson's Disease) had a history of falls and was known to be unsteady on her feet. Despite the employer having this knowledge, Shantha was required to visit the patient alone. Had Shantha had a colleague with her, the patient could have been held safely and the accident avoided.

Key message: Risk assessments should include close inspection of patient records so that any specific requirements and hazards are identified and adequate controls put in place.

Fire

Lone workers are particularly at risk in the event of fire.

Under the fire regulations employers must:

- Assess the risks from fire;
- Check that fires can be detected in a reasonable time (all buildings must have fire detection and warning systems);
- Check that staff can leave the building safely;

- Provide fire fighting equipment;
- Check that workers know what to do if there is a fire.

Even with compliance with all these measures there are still increased risks for lone workers. A worker may be overcome by fumes or smoke, or slip and injure themselves, before they are able to evacuate the building. Therefore, when lone working can't be eliminated, special attention should be given to ensuring lone workers know what to do and where to go in the event of a fire. In addition managers should be able to:

- Locate the whereabouts of lone workers;
- Summon support if required;
- Know that all workers have left the building safely.

For more information on what to do in the event of a fire go to the UNISON website (see Appendix).

Hazardous chemicals and other dangerous substances

Employers must carry out a risk assessment under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations before any workers use such substances. This should take account of any specific risks faced by people working alone and set out a safe system of work which will protect them from exposure.

UNISON's guide, "Hazardous substances at work" (see Appendix), outlines the control measures that should apply to all workers. These include:

- Designing out hazards through work processes and engineering controls;
- Controlling exposure at source, such as through adequate ventilation systems;
- Personal protective equipment (PPE).

However, in the case of lone workers the risks of these hazards are increased. In some cases where it is not possible to eliminate lone working, it may be

possible to design out the hazard by, for example, additional restrictions on lone workers handling the most hazardous substances. Other additional controls include providing lone workers with first aid kits for treating minor injuries, and a means of obtaining help if required.

Isolated and remote areas

As well as working alone, many workers are also required to work in remote and isolated areas. Where this is the case risk assessments should take account of, or provide for, the following:

- A safe means of travel where workers are required to travel from the normal place of work, including when working out of hours;
- The time it will take to do the work and how frequently the employee should report in and what will happen if they don't;
- Access to toilets, rest, refreshment and first aid facilities;
- Policy and procedures for reporting and responding to emergencies;
- The speed and ease with which emergency services are able to reach the isolated area.

Case study

Michelle worked as a school escort, ensuring that a number of children with special needs got safely to school. Her job involved a 40 miles return journey taking four hours in total. During this time she was accompanied by only the children and the driver. This meant she was working without supervision or the support of her colleagues. She was instructed not to leave the children alone with the driver. For many years the school had allowed her to use toilets, but then a new "closed door" security policy was adopted. This meant she was no longer allowed into the school; despite being DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checked, having ID badges, and previously delivering children

to the classroom if they were late. The journey home made the problem worse as it was often another 40 minutes before finally arriving home.

She raised this issue with her line manager, and was told to use the toilet at the local supermarket or a public toilet. However, the supermarket toilet was for customer use only, and public toilets were not always available or open before 8am. In addition clearly these options could only be used on the way home after dropping off all the children. As she acknowledged she had responsibility for three children with severe learning disabilities. It would therefore have been unacceptable to leave them in a vehicle with just a male driver who had no emergency or first aid training.

Michelle is still working as a school escort, but now delivers children to a different school, where she is permitted to use the school toilet.

Key message: Employers must ensure that lone workers' basic requirements, such as access to a toilet, bathroom, water and rest facilities are catered for when designing their jobs.

Home working

Many UNISON members are now given the option of working from home. As the TUC recognises, home working can provide many benefits including:

- More control for workers over their working time;
- Saving time and money on costly commutes;
- Allowing some disabled workers to access the labour market and;
- From an employer's perspective, improving retention of staff.

However it must also be properly managed and this includes workers' health, safety and welfare. Employers have the same obligations to protect home workers, as those who work on-site. However

research by the HSE has found that awareness amongst home workers of health and safety issues is low. It also found that employers frequently neglect their obligations to carry out risk assessments and provide adequate information, equipment and training.

This may in part be caused by confusion over their legal obligations. According to the HSE website the employer is responsible for the safety of any equipment they provide, but not for that provided by the employee. As the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) explains, the contract of employment should set out what the employer will provide, and what the employee is expected to provide. For example the employer may provide equipment such as furniture, phone, phone line and other IT equipment, but expect the employee to provide lighting and heating. ACAS goes on to explain that employers should specify who the equipment belongs to, and who is responsible for maintaining and moving it. UNISON branches need to ensure this is clearly stipulated and understood by those staff affected.

However, whoever provides the equipment, the employer still has an overriding duty to risk assess whether the “proposed home workplace’s ventilation, temperature, lighting, space, chair, desk and computer, or any other kind of work station, and floor are suitable for the tasks the home worker will be asked to do” (see ACAS website, details in the Appendix).

Case study

Sarah is a keyboard operator who works from home. Her work is delivered by post and she e-mails it back. A computer was issued to her by her employer, but they did not provide any seating, a desk or health and safety information. She usually works in the kitchen and has been getting backache and pains in her shoulders for some time.

In this case, the employer should have done an ergonomic assessment as required by

the Display Screen Equipment Regulations. In fact, not only did they not check Sarah’s house before the equipment was delivered, they also did not give her advice on how to set it up, sitting posture, the importance of taking breaks or her rights to eye tests.

Key messages: Where the workplace is at home, make sure the contract stipulates and everyone understands what the employer and employee is expected to provide and maintain. Whoever provides the equipment the employer must risk assess whether the workstation is safe and suitable.

Visiting people in their homes

Many UNISON members have jobs that require them to visit clients/patients in their homes. Although employers should minimize lone working many of these visits are made by staff working alone. When this is the case their employers should ensure that there is provision and resources for staff to be accompanied should the risk assessment highlight the need. If, for example, the patient has a history of challenging behaviour, or a condition or disability, additional support may be required when lifting and handling. Before sending out staff on visits employers should ensure they have been:

- Briefed about the geographical areas where they work;
- Given all available information about the client and other members of the public they may have contact with;
- Where required, fully trained in strategies for the prevention and management of challenging behaviour.

In addition have staff:

- Understood the importance of reviewing cases?
- Left details of where they are working and made plans to keep in contact with colleagues?

- The means to get support should the main switchboard be closed?
- The authority to arrange an accompanied visit, security escort, or the use of taxis?

Domiciliary/Homecare workers

Homecare, or domiciliary-care, often involves working in isolated environments looking after elderly and other vulnerable clients. The clients may often have limited mobility and serious, sometimes, multiple health conditions including dementia, Parkinson's disease, diabetes and multiple sclerosis. This leaves the workers who care for them at risk of hazards such as assault, manual handling injuries, slips and trips, needlestick injuries and the spread of infection through poor hygiene.

There is often confusion regarding when health and safety laws apply to domiciliary care workers. Health and safety at work legislation does not apply to someone employed as a domestic worker (classed as "domestic service") working in somebody's home. However it does apply where care involves either:

- complex healthcare activities (such as the operation of life support/palliative care equipment), or;
- specialist training (such as people handling and dealing with challenging behaviour).

Where carers work for the NHS, local authorities, employment agencies, or in the community and voluntary sector, they are likely to be covered by one of the above two categories but branches/regs will need to check.

A detailed explanation as to when, and when not, domiciliary care is exempted from health and safety at work legislation, can be found on the HSE website (see Appendix).

Many home care workers are also forced by some agencies to work as self-employed workers. Since 1 October 2015 self employed workers have been exempted from health and safety legislation, as long

as their activities do not pose a risk to the health and safety of other workers or members of the public. However just because someone is self employed for tax/contractual purposes does not mean they are classed as self employed under health and safety law. This is determined by multiple factors, most importantly the practical circumstances surrounding the relationship between the agency and the worker. Again it is likely that most agency home care workers would be covered by health and safety legislation. More information on this issue can be found on the HSE website (see Appendix).

Case study

Janis had an appointment to visit a client at 6:15 pm. On arrival the client shouted at Janis for being too early. Janis rang her employment agency for clarification over the time, and they informed her she had arrived at the correct time. Janis explained this to the client, who although still unhappy, allowed her to start to undress her in preparation for a wash. At this point the client physically assaulted Janis. Janis had not been trained in how to manage or restrain clients with such challenging behaviour, despite the client having a record of such behaviour. However Janis calmly withdrew from the situation and again phoned for advice. She was advised there was nothing that could be done, that she had to finish her care, and would then have to fill in an incident report on her return to the agency the following morning. Janis went back into the client's room and continued with the care despite constant verbal abuse.

Key messages: By insisting on Janis continuing with the appointment regardless, the agency was putting Janis's health and safety at risk. Janis should have been empowered to withdraw if she believed her health and safety was at risk. Although the agency may have been correct in ensuring the incident was properly recorded, there first priority should have been to ensure Janis came to no harm.

As the client had a previous record of challenging behaviour, good practice would have been to ensure Janis was accompanied by a colleague for the appointment. Failing that, Janis should at least have been trained in managing such situations.

Finally although the client may have been confused, this was not an excuse for either physical or verbal abuse. By insisting Janis carry on with caring for the client regardless, this could have been interpreted by the client that such violent and abusive behaviour was acceptable, when it clearly was not.

Driving

Some members have to spend long periods driving alone as part of their work activities. Risks for drivers working alone include fatigue, long hours, sleep disrupting shift patterns, and the possibility of breaking down in isolated areas. These risks can also be increased by employers expecting staff to use their own vehicles, as low pay can lead to compromises on vehicle maintenance. These should be taken into account when risk assessments are carried out.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) has published useful guides to managing road risk (see Appendix).

Branch checklist

Make sure your employers risk assessments identify all workers that work alone or in isolation. Remember it is not always obvious who the lone workers are. Some workers although spending some of their time with others around them can still spend substantial time working alone.

Make sure all the hazards are identified. Remember working alone increases the risks of all hazards. By focusing on one hazard employers can ignore others.

Has your employer done everything reasonably practicable to design work so that lone working is avoided or otherwise minimized?

Where lone working cannot be eliminated, its hazards must be controlled. Make sure your employer considers all measures and controls.

Have staff that are required to visit people in their homes been:

- Fully trained in managing challenging (e.g. violent) behaviour?
- Briefed about the locations where they work? Has access to these been risk assessed?
- Given all the available information about their clients (e.g. history of challenging behaviour, lifting/manual handling requirements)?

Also does your employer have in place systems that provide:

- Details of work schedules for the day?
- Expected arrival and departure times?
- Contact names and telephone numbers?
- Arrangements for reporting in at regular intervals?
- Raising the alarm if this does not occur and the worker cannot be contacted?

Is any technology, such as lone worker devices, backed up by robust systems that enable workers to get help should they require it? Did employers consult with you and your members on this or any other measures of prevention and control before introducing them?

Has your employer done everything that is reasonably practicable to eliminate manual handling? Where manual handling is still being practiced, are staff required to work alone? If yes, try and argue for either them to be accompanied by a colleague when carrying out these tasks, or at least for a means of quickly getting support should they require it.

What do lone workers understand and know about any hazardous substances they are using? Have COSHH risk assessments been carried out? Have the findings been shared and consulted on? Do lone workers know what to do in an emergency?

Do lone workers, including community based staff, have access to basic facilities such as toilets?

Where staff are working from home, have their work stations been risk assessed?

Have risk assessments been carried out on staff who have to drive as part of their job? Do these staff use their own cars? What vehicle checks are carried out? Do they work long hours or shifts?

Appendix

UNISON publications and websites

Publications available from the UNISON Online Catalogue

Risk assessment: a guide for UNISON safety reps (stock no 1351)

Safety representatives and safety committees. The regulations, codes of practice and guidance relating to the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations, 1977 (Brown Book) (stock no 1819)

It's not part of the job: a health and safety guide on tackling violence at work (stock no 1346)

Privacy and data protection: a guide for UNISON branches (stock no 3535)

Hazardous substances at work: a guide for UNISON branches (stock no 3506)

Aches, pains and strains; Dealing with issues arising from manual handling, DSE and RSI: a guide for UNISON health and safety representatives (stock no 3827)

Information sheets

www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/health-and-safety/

HSE websites (www.hse.gov.uk)

Lone workers. Available at www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/lone.htm

Domiciliary care provided in people's own homes. Available at www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/domiciliary-care.htm

Self employed – do I have duties. Available at www.hse.gov.uk/self-employed/

Home workers. Available at www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm

Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) (2002) Scoping exercise for research into the health and safety of homeworkers. Sheffield: HSL (please note the HSL is now part of the HSE)

Other websites, information and guidance

ACAS (2014) Homeworking – a guide for employers and employees. Available at www.acas.org.uk/

Croner-i (2017) Lone working in a laboratory. Available at app.croneri.co.uk/feature-articles/lone-working-laboratory?product=32

ICO (2017) Data sharing code of practice. Available at ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/

ROSPA (2017) An introduction to managing road risk. Available at www.rospace.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/road-safety/employers/introduction-to-morr.pdf

TUC (2008) Risk assessment: a guide for safety representatives. London: TUC. Available at www.tuc.org.uk

